

Fred Shepardson speech, May 7, 1970

(122 lines)
skipped

Some of what I had to say has been said in different words by Dr. Armstrong. I'll try to go through that more quickly.

There has been a fire. Recitation Hall has been burned. In the words of the fire marshal it was clearly an act of arson. But I think we're all agreed that an act of arson certainly is not in keeping with the ideals and the principles we have been trying to encourage the last few days. I think it has to be emphasized that we cannot say who did it or who did not do it. We just don't know. We can't say that it was a Middlebury College student. And we can't say that it was not. The possibilities are endless, and we have to keep our minds open on this question. But we must keep in mind that whoever did it could do it again. It could have been somebody who was using this as a first example, or maybe it was somebody in a last desperation. However, we have to guard against its happening again.

The students and faculty will have to join together to defend all the buildings on the campus. Perhaps continuing this as long as the College is in session. Already there is a committee being set up under the direction of Obey Benz, Dean Peterson, and Officer Spencer to organize student patrols and vigils to make sure that no further acts of violence occur to our buildings. I personally feel that the suspension of classes through May 10th should continue.

We've built up a lot of momentum in the last few days, and I think we're doing a lot of constructive work towards very serious purposes, with the main goal being to end the war in Indo-China. If we continue to work in the next few days as we have in the past perhaps we can achieve the goals that we've set up for this week and hopefully much more. But it is very important that if, and when, we continue, we come back even more strongly as a cohesive group to insure there is no recurrence of the violence that occurred last night. (11) We must pledge ourselves to complete non-violence. Robert Pack, today, very early this morning, in a special meeting, asked for a moratorium on all violence, including flagrant actions and inflammatory rhetoric as well. Because such rhetoric does sometimes lead to violent action although that ~~was~~ not what was intended. We must control our words as well as our deeds. (12) In this manner I think the student strike should continue. And when the College, as a unified community, has made its policy decisions, I think we should take up the idea of canvassing the townspeople once again. This would have to go on in a very careful and a very controlled manner. There is a great deal of fear in the town right now. We've been talking with the men from the fire department, and the townspeople are not happy with Middlebury College. And there is not only a great deal of fear in town but there is a great deal on the campus respecting how the townspeople think

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about us. And I think its only a natural tendency to shy away from communicating with them. To say, "I'm scared of them, they're scared of me, I'm not going to go near them. We're just going to cause trouble." But I think that that is overlooking one of the main goals of the student strike. One of our principles is that we have to communicate the way ~~that~~ we feel, and the ideas that we have, to the people in our community and throughout the country, and hopefully throughout the world. And so we're going to have to go out and meet these people and meet them more than half-way. We're going to have to be ready to sacrifice, to wear jackets and ties, to cut our hair if need be. We're going to have to go out and talk up to them, talk with them, ask for their opinion^s, and try to encourage a dialogue. ⁽¹⁾ This canvassing may have to be taken up very slowly, very carefully, and I think it should probably continue whether or not classes resume on Monday. I'm not dictating that classes will or will not resume on Monday. I feel that that question is up to the student body. That ^{I feel that} each individual among us must decide as a matter of individual conscience ^{he will continue} whether the strike ^{beyond Monday} will continue for him. The faculty can vote; they can make a policy decision; and I think we should weigh their decisions and their recommendations, and their advice very carefully. However, I think the final decision, as I have said, is a matter

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of individual conscience for each of us. But we must not only consider what we will do with the strike if it continues -- this is a very important aspect -- we must ^{first} decide ^{whether} ~~if~~ we will use our time to the best advantage ~~if we continue~~ ^{by} to strike, and disband ^{ing} further classes. If we split up and a lot of us go home, are we going to lose our momentum? How many of us will keep on working for a strike, and how many of us will ^{just} go to work to support ourselves? ~~And~~ ^{also}, we are going to have to consider what will happen if we go back to classes. We must think about our formal education, and what it means to each of us. And when we have decided its worth for us, then we must ^{decide whether} ~~make the decision if we think~~ this situation merits our giving up that worth.

For myself, ~~I feel that the situation has not yet~~ ~~merited it.~~ I feel that classes should resume on Monday. An institution of learning ~~and education~~ must, in the final ^{analysis} ~~recourse~~, be ~~transcendent of~~ politics. Our institution does have a dual ~~nature~~ of responsibility. We must be aware of the political situation. ~~We must be involved in it.~~ ^{but} We cannot become merely tools or pawns of either the right or the left. We must, in the last resort, be ready to be independent. And to go on regardless of the political situation. The College cannot make politics the entire life of the people in it. And going back to classes is not necessarily going ^{back}. It can be going ahead.

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I feel we have to work to make the College the vehicle
of formal learning. We must work to make sure that
that learning is what we want, and is what is relevant, or
^{and our teachers} what we [^]feel is relevant, and our teachers feel. But
I think that for those who have not lost faith in the
university structure, ^(but who) that as a matter of individual
conscience, cannot go on this year, ^{- who} they feel they
must go out and support the strike ^{and} to work for peace
in Indo-China, I hope that the Administration will
allow these individual students to leave and not be
penalized for it... ~~to~~ be allowed to make it up or in
some other way to continue next year if they feel they
can come back at that time.

Thank you.

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